

THE FUTURE OF CHECHNYA

THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 1997

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
WASHINGTON, DC

The Commission met, pursuant to adjournment, at 11:08 a.m., in room 538, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Honorable Alfonse D'Amato, Chairman of the Commission, presiding.

Sen. D'Amato. Good morning. I am pleased to be here and to welcome to the hearing on Commission of Security and Cooperation Ambassador Guldemann, looking forward to hearing his testimony, and also welcome Representative Jon Christensen. It's good to have him join us.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN ALFONSE M. D'AMATO, CHAIRMAN

While the world's attention has been focused on the carnage in Bosnia, an equally bloody conflict was taking place further east, in the Russian Federation, as the people of Chechnya sought to free themselves from the Russian or Soviet power. The world watched, horrified, as the Russian military used massive firepower against the Chechen guerrillas.

In the testimony before this Commission last year, and in 1995, respected Russian human rights advocates reported on Russia's military brutality against the residents of Chechnya. As of this date, the death toll of the war in Chechnya stands anywhere between 30 and 80 thousand people. Tens of thousands of men, women, and children have been driven from their homes. While the international community recognizes the principles of territorial integrity, there can be no doubt that in its effort to keep the Chechens in the Russian Federation, the Russian Government violated recognized international principles.

For example, the 1994 Budapest Document of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, with which the Russians agree, stipulates that each participating state will ensure that its armed forces are commanded in a way that is consistent with the provisions of international law. And, moreover, that even when force cannot be avoided, each state will ensure that its use must be commensurate with the needs.

The Russian general staff clearly never heard of the Budapest Document. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe sent an assistant mission. It went to Bosnia in 1995 in May with a mandate to aid in resolving the conflict. Diplomacy would seem helpless

in the face of bloody assaults and equally bloody reprisals. However, the accomplishment of today's distinguished guest shows that such pessimism is sometimes wrong.

Ambassador Tim Guldemann has been head of the OSCE mission and OSCE since January of last year. I believe it is fair to say that he has been credited by all sides in the conflicts, as well as the OSCE diplomatic community, for his energy, his perseverance in helping to bring about a negotiated peace to the Chechen conflict.

The fact is now there is a cease-fire. The dangers, as we know from recent reports, have not entirely ended. We are looking forward to hearing from the Ambassador so that he can bring us up-to-date and let us know just where we are.

Now, I gave an abbreviated description of the events, because if I were to read all of them, and all of the accomplishments of the Ambassador, and the skill and the ingenuity that he has used in bringing this cessation at the present time around, we would be here all day.

But, Mr. Ambassador, we are deeply appreciative of your incredible efforts to bring us to this point.

I now turn to my distinguished co-chairman and friend, Congressman Hoyer.

OPENING STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE STENY H. HOYER

Mr. Hoyer. I thank the Chairman. I want to say at the outset, I welcome him back as the chair of this Commission. Actually, his co-chairman is Chris Smith, who chaired it in the last Congress, as it goes between the House and the Senate.

For those of you who have watched the history of the Helsinki Commission as established in 1976 by the Congress, Senator D'Amato, in my opinion, is one of those persons most responsible for ensuring that the Helsinki Commission of the United States continued as a professional, focused organization in a bipartisan fashion. I make that point many times. But Senator D'Amato, under great pressure from a lot of people to politicize the Commission, refused to do so, and I think that contribution in and of itself is a major one to the work and effectiveness of this Commission. I welcome him back to the leadership, and look forward, as I have over the last 12 years, to working closely with him. He is a champion of human rights and focuses on heated problems around the world.

Mr. Chairman, it is good to share the podium with you. In the past 2 years, as you know, the Commission has held four hearings on the Chechen crisis, and I commend Co-chairman Smith for keeping this issue before the Congress and the administration. We heard expert testimony from eyewitnesses such as Sergei Kovalev to the carnage in that tortured land, as well as informed opinion on the background, the struggle and the possibility of political settlement in Chechnya.

I, too, have a statement of some length that I would like to include in the record at this time. Suffice it to say that this is a very difficult and thorny issue for Russia, and it has been, I'm sure, like some issues in other countries, mishandled by Russian leadership. I think they recognize that. General Lebed, I think, made a determination ultimately that this was a very negative involvement. Whether or not we have resolved a solution is questionable, obviously, at this point in time. But I look forward, as you do, Mr. Chairman, to hearing the Ambassador, who has spent a lot of time and devoted a lot of exper-

tise to this issue. I think it is critically important that this Commission continue to focus, make sure the American public is aware of this issue. Not just because of its impact in Russia and on the Chechen people, but also because of the ramifications it has for like problems in other participating OSCE states.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to join you as well in welcoming Jon Christensen from Nebraska to the Commission. I think he will bring some real focus and expertise and energy to the deliberations of this Commission, and will assist us very greatly. I'm glad to have him with us.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Sen. D'Amato. Thank you, Congressman.

Congressman Christensen, and it is a delight to have you with us. I'm very pleased.

Mr. Christensen. Thank you. I have no opening statement.

Sen. D'Amato. Mr. Ambassador, we are looking forward to you bringing us up to date on what you see as the critical issues that we will be facing in the near-term, and then the long-term. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR TIM GULDIMANN, HEAD OF THE OCSE ASSISTANCE GROUP IN CHECHNYA.

Amb. Guldumann. Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I have prepared a paper on the experience of the Assistance Group. I don't want to repeat this. I just would like to HIGHLIGHT some points, and I think the main issue will be then the discussion.

I have four points: First, what we did; second, how we did it; third, (and I think this is the main point here) lessons; and, fourth, some other perspectives of future activity of the Assistance Group.

The Assistance Group is a group of seven, six, sometimes eight diplomats and officers who work in this Assistance Group. It's a small budget, \$2 to \$3 million a year. We succeeded last year in brokering the first top-level meeting of the parties to the conflict on May 27th to resume the negotiation process which started in 1995 after the August storming of Grozny. We supported the peace process, and a very important contribution of the OSCE and the Assistance Group was supporting the elections on January 27th. We supported them by bringing in the money to finance the organization, by even taking part in the organization such as going to print the ballot sheets and, above all, to bring in over 70 international observers who were very important to testimony afterwards that these were free and fair elections.

Now, three points to how we worked: contacts, confidence, and mediation.

As to the contacts, it was very important that we tried, on our initiative, to have as many as intensive contacts with both sides of the conflict. What we did there is to try to bring over information about what is happening on the other side. This was important because, in such a conflict, both sides are badly informed about positions on the other sides. It often happened that I was asked, when I tried to explain to them, above all in Moscow, the position of the other side that they said, well, are you a lawyer of Yandarbiev, and said no. I had always to stress, I'm not Yandarbiev's lawyer. I just want to explain to you what is going on, on the other side. It's also that meant that both sides knew exactly that all the information I would convey to the other side. This was interesting on August 5th, the day before the

storm on Grozny that everybody knew about this, but I didn't know. That means that the Chechen side did not inform me knowing exactly that I would immediately inform the Federal side. So this, by such hints, one knows that both sides also understood what we could do.

As to confidence, it is clear that if you work in such an environment, through time you are able to establish personal relations, which are very important. These people have confidence in you, in that they are able to discuss with you as a diplomat things which are, let's say, thoughts in their internal kitchen, thoughts which they assume I would not directly convey to the other side. But it was important that even in such situations, I could participate in a kind of political discussion on both sides and assist them.

What we did in the mediation was that we conveyed information about intentions, about proposals. I described it in the paper how this worked. We did arrange meetings. Just an example, at the end of June, it was agreed in Nasran that the two military commanders would have to meet. The Federal military commander, Tikhomirov, was reluctant. I had to go to his headquarters, and I spoke to him for 1½ hours until I could convince him to to meet General Maskhadov in our armored car. So both just near to a checkpoint were able to meet alone in a car. This was the only possible way to bring about this meeting.

What we could contribute here was to go to the General and to convince him, and to work on him until he accepted that, knowing exactly that the other side was interested in having this meeting.

We also gave advice. For instance, I described in a paper that after the August event, the cease-fire was worked out between Lebed and Maskhadov, and the contacts continued at that level. We had the impression that it would be important to bring the process to the level of Yandarbiev and Chernomyrdin, so that it was not only two persons at a somewhat lower level who are carrying the process along, and this, in concrete terms, happened in a way that I went to Lebed as well, we flew back together from Grozny to Moscow, and then afterwards we had a meeting. I tried to convince him, to tell him, look, you have to bring the process to Yandarbiev, because otherwise Yandarbiev and other commanders would be in a position to what Maskhadov is doing, also in view of the future, because they already foresaw that its unity, the political unity of their side, might be jeopardized once the political process is starting, as it really happened this year.

So, he accepted that, and some weeks later I was asked to arrange a meeting between Lebed and Yandarbiev, and later on also on the Federal side I tried to support a process where, in the end, on October 3rd, there was a meeting between Yandarbiev and Chernomyrdin, accompanied by Lebed. But that was important in this period between August and November to bring it up.

Then what I already have said as to the elections: Within the negotiations, for instance, in Nasran, our task was to try to bring the people together, maybe apart from the main meeting where the two delegations were sitting, or to go between the two sessions of the negotiations in Nasran back to Yandarbiev and to work out a possible proposal for the main issue which, at that time, was the tolerance on the

Chechen side for the Presidential elections on the one side, and that the local elections would not take place as long as the Federal troops would be in the country.

So this was quite a substantial support of the process, and the question is, why was it possible? Or, in other words, if we have an organization as the OSCE, what can such an organization do? That brings me to the third point or lessons. I think the most important point as an experience in this work of the last 10 years is the following: If you have a conflict, the main question for peace, well, it would be too simple to say, it is just a question of whether both sides would like to negotiate with each other. It is more appropriate to see what is happening within the new sides, and there you have the doves and the hawks, and the peace process depends on the question to what extent on both sides the doves convince the hawks, or are superior or are able to succeed in getting a lead on the hawks.

Now, the role of the international community in such a process is to support the doves on both sides in their internal quarrel. That is a main issue which is not so conspicuous in such a process. Now, how can OSCE do that? I think our experience was that the success was due to a tandem between a, I could say, highly qualified small group on the spot and a very strong international support for their action abroad.

Now, having the Assistance Group on the spot, working within the framework of an organization as the OSCE, it was possible to have this small group on the spot linked to an international support which was able to be mobilized in the framework of OSCE to intervene in different manners on both sides for their internal discussion. Then that we were brokering between the two sides, but the process depended, above all, on the success, how we could influence the two camps in the conflict.

Now, how this worked, the first point was here that importance of information out of the crisis area, that we sent to Vienna every week a report about what happened, that we had constant telephone calls with Vienna, with also the American Embassy in Moscow, with the delegations in Vienna or in Moscow. The purpose of that was to inform and also to see to it that Chechnya remained on the agenda, that Chechnya was important. You cannot have a topic like a crisis in Chechnya which is considered to be important unless you are able to deliver all the information continuously to the governments, to the delegations in Vienna, so that they can see to it that their governments at home look to the issue.

Then, it was important to have this link between the group on the spot, and delegations for specific interventions. I think the main intervention here was due to a very good cooperation with the American Embassy in Moscow. I always, when I was in Moscow, informed them and Thomas Pickering did a very, very good job for us in supporting our action. We had a meeting around August 1718, it was about, and this was just immediately after the cease-fire in Grozny, and we discussed that the main danger would be that Federal troops would try to reoccupy the city. Then I told Ambassador Pickering that it is very important that everything could be done to prevent that in case this would happen. Now, 2 days later, there was the announcement of a 48-hour ultimatum, that they gave, let's say, 48 hours for the civilian population to leave the city until they would attack

the city of Grozny. This would have been a catastrophe. Fortunately, also through this tandem, through this link, there was a very strong pressure. The most important thing was the letter of President Clinton to President Yeltsin, just on this topic.

Now, what I wanted to show is that by having this group on the spot, by the ability to gather precise information and send it back to the international community, it was possible to develop this pressure. You can say it had an impact on the internal quarrel between doves and hawks on the Federal side. The same thing on the other side, I mentioned it in the paper that after June 16th, it was in view of June 16th, the election, that the Chechen side had well, in the Nasran agreement it was set that elections, local elections, should take place only after a troop withdrawal. The spirit of this was clearly that no local elections would take place on June 16th. They were done altogether in spite of this. The Chechen side indicated that they might do something. I was asked to convey that they should not do something. The fact that I was able to announce a statement of the OSCE on these local elections prevented them from attacking Grozny, as I was told afterwards. I think this is the most important thing.

In general it was important to have very strong support for the Assistance Group by the whole community of the OSCE. Here, again, I would like to thank Ambassador Sam Brown and Thomas Pickering for the tremendous support I got for this work from the American side.

As to the future, as the situation is such that both sides now can deal with each other in direct contact, we don't have to participate or to support the direct political dialog anymore. Right now, we do not participate in these contacts. What we do is concentrate our endeavors on the humanitarian issues. One is that, within a Commission of the prisoner of war, there are many bodies which are buried in Chechnya, that they should be exhumated and identified. That is a field where the OSCE can make a contribution. Another field is the demining issue, which is very important. There also international help is crucial because the Chechen side is not able to cope with it. There might be some assistance from the Federal side, but it will be important that this issue can be pursued in Chechnya.

There are other two important issues: The sewage system in Grozny is in very bad shape and should be repaired. Otherwise, there's a huge danger of epidemics. The other issue is that, as a consequence of the war, there is a huge contamination due to oil production. This is similar to what happened in Kuwait, and something should be done about this. Now, these four prisoner of war, demining, sewage system, and oil contamination are areas where the Assistance Group could help in organizing, supporting international help.

Thank you very much.

Sen. D'Amato. Well, Mr. Ambassador, again, let me thank you for the manner in which you worked. I think you've understated the tremendous job you've done. Let me ask you, if you were to look at the situation now, how fragile is the peace that now exists? Is there a danger of it coming to an abrupt end?

Amb. Guldemann. It depends on what you refer to as peace. If you refer to the question of whether there could be another outbreak of military hostility between the Federal side and Chechnya, I would rather exclude the possibility. I'm very optimistic that this will not happen.

Sen. D'Amato. Good.

Amb. Guldemann. Due to different reasons.

Sen. D'Amato. What you're saying is that the problem existant with creating a quality of life that is not life-threatening_a situation that is obviously very severe, and that's the No. 1 thing you mentioned_sewage treatment. What, if anything, is being done? And how massive a problem? Has there been any estimate? Are there efforts to address that health problem?

Amb. Guldemann. I think the main issue here, and this brings me back to your first question, is that the general situation is not stable inside the republic, above all due to a tremendous criminality, which might be linked to certain political forces. Now, this creates an environment in which it is very difficult to organize the first steps of reconstruction, of reorganizing the society. Also it makes it very difficult for foreign aid to come into Chechnya, just because they need to work with armed guards, as we do. So I think this is the main issue now: to what extent will it be possible within Chechnya to establish stable political structures in order that such problems can be tackled? What is the future for the population? There is a danger of increased criminality and even political fort inside?????, which is not the danger of resumption of the hostilities.

Sen. D'Amato. So, while there is no imminent or immediate danger as it relates to the kinds of hostilities that existed between the Federal side and the Chechens, what you see is the breakdown of civility within and the various forces within Chechnya going at each other. How do you see that being resolved?

Amb. Guldemann. I think the elections were a very important step forward in this direction. This means the following, by having democratic elections internationally recognized as such, Aslan Maskhadov got 59 percent of the population with a turnout of 80 percent. It is very clear that the population wants him. Now, this means in the internal fort, or the internal quarrels, that Maskhadov can rely on this popular vote. This makes it easier for him to get an arrangement with the other main forces. It doesn't mean that he will succeed in doing so, but the danger of an internal quarrel is surely decreased.

At the same time, these elections made it legitimate to have a new government which is the interlocutor of the Federal side. Now, on February 2nd, President Yeltsin wrote Aslan Maskhadov and congratulated him for his election. He is now considered to be the president of this republic. He's not a bandit anymore. So, by having these elections, this was a great step forward. It doesn't mean that it will succeed in the internal quarrels. The fact that there are no journalists right now in Chechnya because it's too danger, or no foreign journalists, or no Russian journalists, that shows how difficult the situation has gotten.

Sen. D'Amato. Congressman Hoyer.

Mr. Hoyer. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We have got a vote on, Senator.

Let me ask a question that complicates this issue, obviously, and the reason it's so tough. Notwithstanding the present situation and the recognition of the election, you referred to the Republic of Chechnya. It is still the Russian Federation, it's the Federal position that Chechnya is an integral part of the Federation; am I correct?

Amb. Guldemann. Correct.

Mr. Hoyer. And it is still the new Government of Chechnya's position that they are, in fact, an independent, sovereign republic apart from the Federal Government?

Amb. Guldemann. That's right.

Mr. Hoyer. How do you see that ultimately playing out? In your statement, and in reality, my understanding is that the central government, the Yeltsin government, while holding to the principle, is prepared, at least at the present time, to deal with Chechnya in the context of their own perception of themselves as independent; is that accurate?

Amb. Guldemann. That's a general point. We are generally used to having clarity in the West, above all. We want to have it clear so that both sides understand the same thing of what we are speaking about.

Mr. Hoyer. I might say then, I know what you're getting to, and I liked your constructive_

Amb. Guldemann. Ambiguity.

Mr. Hoyer. _right, ambiguity, constructive ambiguity I think is used a lot on Capitol Hill. So, we're familiar with this concept. Go ahead, Mr. Ambassador.

Amb. Guldemann. Now, that means that, in fact, the Russian Federation gave total autonomy to the Chechen Republic, de facto, not yet de jure, but de facto by withdrawing all the troops, it recognized that there is a territory which is autonomous. It means they have their own laws, de facto. This has not been sorted out yet exactly with the Duma, but that's reality now. Now they know that the only way to deal with them is on the basis of mutual agreements. This principle already has been taken up in the agreement signed on October 3rd for the intermediate period until the elections, and it remains the principle now that whenever there is a problem, both sides can sit together and resolve the problem in a way that they declare both sides agree on something, but that the Federal side interprets this agreement as an agreement between the Federal Centre and the subject of the Russian Federation, a specific special subject. Whereas, the other side sees this as kind of an international agreement. As long as both sides are interested in having such agreements, it works.

Now, Khasav'yurt Agreement says that the mutual relations between both sides will be the object, or should be the object of a peaceful settlement by 2001. Hopefully, it could be tomorrow according to the Khasav'yurt Agreement. Hopefully this can be done. I think in the immediate future, Maskhadov is absolutely unable to discuss anything else than the confirmation of independence due to the political situation within Chechnya. Now, that is his position, and the Federal side knows exactly this is his position, and he has to survive. So I think they can go on quite well knowing of each other that they have common interests. Later on, well, it can continue or it can be settled. I think the main issue now is to tackle the problems of the immediate future and not just speak about the status of the republic.

Mr. Hoyer. I think you're absolutely accurate in the constructive ambiguity of which you speak and agreeing, in effect, to disagree on the ultimate question is useful.

Let me ask you the last question before I have to leave to go vote, and then I apologize, Mr. Ambassador, because I have a 12:00 meeting. I will not be able to return to the hearing. On the issue of the present Chechen Government, you referenced, but would you speak more particularly as to their human rights performance and commitment to carrying out Helsinki principles and other international human rights understandings?

Amb. Guldemann. When asked, they say, "We stick to all these principles, and we will see to it that they are fulfilled in the Republic of Chechnya." I think so far there are no very disturbing signs that from the official side these principles are violated. This does not mean that in an environment where criminality is increasing, and where, due to this criminality, there are ethnic groups, such as for instance the Russian-speaking minority, which is in a very difficult situation, does not suffer a general situation of a society which is not able to guarantee human rights in general. That, I think, is the main problem. It is not, at least not so far, that the Chechen Government would do anything discriminating against certain groups in the republic.

So, I think their difficulties in the last 6 months were so huge that one can say, well, you have got good intentions, there are no signs that you try to violate or violate human rights, but it has to be seen to what extent this government is able to normalize the internal structures, to build up the legal structure, and then one has to see to what extent they are able to fulfill these principles. Their intentions are very good, but that doesn't mean yet very much.

Mr. Hoyer. Well, one of the roles of this committee is to ensure that intentions are, in fact, reality to the extent that we can realize that objective.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I regret that we have to leave.

Sen. D'Amato. Well, I understand that, and I want to thank you, and Congressman Christensen, for attending today's hearing.

Amb. Guldemann. A little point to that????? is that these elections, as far as human rights are concerned, I think that's a very important aspect of human rights, the fact that the republic was able to organize these elections in a democratic way shows the maturity in the field which gives a good indication of their intentions.

Sen. D'Amato. Let me ask you this, Mr. Ambassador: what can and are we doing to help to bring about a situation that might be more conducive to a rebuilding process? Dealing with all the problems that you've mentioned? Obviously you're saying the number one problem is the criminality and the political battling that sometimes is more than just at the election box ballots? But is there anything we can do as a practical matter, we being the outside world?

Amb. Guldemann. I think the outside world should focus on three things. First, to make sure that Chechnya remains on the agenda although the war has stopped. I mean, one forgets very quickly that this is a very difficult situation. Second, one should take care not to provoke negative reactions concerning a touchy issue. An intervention from outside on this issue is not helpful.

Sen. D'Amato. I think you're touching on something that many or some may be thinking: Do you see the possibility of, or have you seen any indications of outside agitation moving into Chechnya?

Amb. Guldemann. No. I think there are some people outside, and that is their full right, who support the Chechen independence, and I do not think that this would get at a government level of any state because everybody or all the governments know exactly that the Russian Federation would react in a very immediate way against such change in the positions. But, I think also on the Chechen side, they know that, and it's interesting that just some days ago not only Maskhadov (I knew right from the beginning that he wants us to stay), but also Yandarbiev and Bassaev have confirmed now that they want the Assistance Group to stay, knowing exactly what is the position of OSCE on this issue. So, I think this just has to be something which has to be explained to the Chechen side: look here, that is your internal quarrel with the Federal Centre, we do not want to interfere. You know what the position is. By not touching this, then it might be possible to do something in the field where it is urgently needed.

Sen. D'Amato. Well, Mr. Ambassador, if there is anything that you think we should know in addition to what you've presented us with today, please contact us. We're ready to assist you. You've undertaken a great mission. I am concerned that there are not developed here's what I'm concerned with, and I'm almost afraid to speak about it. Do you see any possibility for, let's say, a fundamentalist, Islamic fundamentalist movement that might come in and complicate the matters? Is there any pressure?

Amb. Guldemann. There are three things to consider: First, Islam was, about 200 years ago, only an instrument of separating one's own culture from the Russian culture. It was not a traditional Islamic area which was which was invaded or intruded upon by outsiders.

Second, during all the conflict with the Russians in the last 150 years and, above all, the war in the last 2 years, never was this considered to be a religious war on the Chechen side. They would have been able to refer to the Koran where it says at different spots, if you have an Islamic area and there are non-believers intruding, then you have the whole concept of jihad which enables you to do whatever you want against these intruders. Now and there, this radicalism would be justified on the basis of Koran, but it has never been referred to this interpretation of the conflict by the Chechen leadership. For the Chechen leadership, it was a national fight of liberation or anti-colonialism, as they put it.

Third, now as to the future, it is not to be totally excluded that an age bracket of men 17 to 25 who did not attend school, who are out of work now, that they would be open to radical Islamic ideologies, and there is an area where maybe some minor groups could become more active in this respect.

Sen. D'Amato. Mr. Ambassador, we've been joined by Congressman Salmon. I know they have just concluded votes, and I believe that Congressman Smith will be over here in a few minutes to address you as well, and raise some questions after the vote is concluded.

So we can take some heart then in the fact that this does not look like it may be a fundamentalist movement that will fuel the conflagration?

Amb. Guldemann. I think there might be some groups who use that to justify their political radicalism. But the fact that 59 percent of the people voted for someone who is not inclined to be open to such radicalism shows that the population is not in favor of it. The population is in favor of having, in whatever status definition, an open door toward Russia, because that is their culture in terms of an environment which has influenced very much the Chechen culture. I don't think that it would be in the interest of the population, or that they would like to be separated in real terms of being closed in their republic, not having an open border toward Russia.

Sen. D'Amato. Let me ask you one final question before I turn to the Congressman. Has there been any estimate as to what the economic need would be to handle some of the more pressing problems such as you mentioned the sewage system and dealing with some of the environmental problems that are most pressing, the oil contamination, et cetera has there been any assessment made as to just how much that will cost?

Amb. Guldemann. I think it is not so much the question of how much money could be brought in because then you can say \$1 million, \$10 million, \$100 million or \$1 billion. Reconstruction is important in terms of rebuilding the republic in the way it was before would-be billions. But it is more a question of what is important to bring in from outside because they do not have it inside, and I think these are the specific areas where foreign aid could be channelled into Chechnya: the exhumation, sewage, also this environment business.

Sen. D'Amato. Congressman Salmon. We're glad to have you with us.

Mr. Salmon. Thank you, Senator. I appreciate the opportunity myself.

I know that last year we held several hearings, both in this task force as well as in the human rights subcommittee chaired by Chris Smith in the House, and we saw a lot of dire things happening in Chechnya. I know I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the conference in Stockholm last summer, and was able to meet and talk with various members from the Russian Duma to talk about our concerns with Chechnya, and I apologize for not getting here sooner or being able to stay for the entire hearing.

I know that since the elections were held there is speculation that things are starting to stabilize a little bit more, yet it continues to be a very, very dangerous place in which to live and to do business. Do you feel that the elections that were held were fair? Did they truly reflect the will of the Chechen people?

Can you give us some insights as far as future Russian involvement with Chechnya? Is it going to adopt a more hands-off approach to Chechnya in the future, or do you see meddling from the Russian Government?

Amb. Guldemann. First the question as to the elections. It's true these were as free and fair as they could have been. For instance, we had the 72 foreign observers in the framework of OSCE who came down and all of them said, well, there are minor violations. For instance, a poster of a candidate in the polling stations, or they made mistakes in calculations, or things like this, but no falsifications which would have had an impact on the result. Also, all the other non-OSCE

observers had the same position on that. We had long term of service in Chechnya. One of them told me that he has observed 16 different elections, and this was one of the best he has seen.

As to why it worked out so well? I think that the main forces, all of them, were interested in having these elections free and fair: the population because it was the first time they really could have democratic elections. The Federal side because they hoped for a solution of the conflict by having a legitimate power on the other side. The different politicians because they thought that their power could be put on a legitimate basis. So there was a tremendous mobilization of population of all important forces in the republic to do it in a good way. Now, as to the future, I think there is the question of criminality which exists in any case.

But the main question will be, to what extent the main forces, political forces and with them military forces behind them, are able to have an agreement among themselves in order to achieve a stable political structure. If this happens, then the violence remains a criminal issue, which can be handled more or less, but it will be a big problem. It would be far more dangerous if this political compromise does not happen. Then it is the danger that criminal violence could be linked to political violence, or to the political level, and then it becomes dangerous. I cannot foresee to what extent this kind of relative stability, as it seems now, can be maintained.

As to the Federal side, I think there is the endeavor to cope with the immediate problems, Ivan Petrovich Rybkin, who is in charge of Chechnya, the secretary of the security council, is doing a very good job in committing himself, going very often to Chechnya, sending delegations, in order to resolve the immediate issue. The problem is that the Russian budget lacks money, and it is very difficult to find now in Russia money for Chechnya. Not because they are against Chechnya, but because they have the mine workers, and they have a lot of other problems and, therefore, it will be problem to find money to pump into Chechnya. But I think it is important for them to resolve the immediate issues in the social and economic area so that they don't have to, let's say, cut it off, so that the border between Chechnya and the rest of the Russian Federation becomes an actual border. This should not be because, otherwise, this also would lead to isolation of it.

Mr. Salmon. What exactly was Alexander Lebed's role in this whole peace process?

Amb. Guldemann. It was important. After the attack on Grozny on August 6, on August 12th or 11th, he was nominated to be in charge of Chechnya by President Yeltsin, and what he did, and this really was a courageous deed, he immediately flew down to Dagestan, came into Chechnya, and somewhere at the border he met Maskhadov, and he had been told that his delegation was shot at, at this encounter. Then he was able to work out a cease-fire for August 13th. Then he was able to work against this, let's say, temptation to reoccupy the city by Federal forces. It was not so clear who wanted what, but it was clear that he made sure that this would not happen. And, afterwards, after all the negotiation process, I met him several more times, sometimes in Moscow. Above all, during these negotiations in Grozny, and in Novye Tagy [sp], it was only Novye Tagy, and once in

Khasavyourt, and it was impressive how he, for seven and a half hours in Khasavyourt was able to push through a paper to get an agreement with the other side, and resolve it very quickly and efficiently.

Mr. Salmon. I know that this question may not be—

Sen. D'Amato. Congressman, if I might just for a moment.

Mr. Salmon. Yes.

Sen. D'Amato. Mr. Ambassador, first of all, let me express my deep appreciation for the outstanding job that you have done, and also let me thank you for coming today to be with us. I have another matter at 12:00. I understand that our co-chairman, Congressman Smith, is on his way here. So, with that, I'd ask your indulgence as I go on to my next meeting, and leave the meeting with Congressman Salmon, and express my thanks for his participation today.

Mr. Salmon. Thank you, Senator.

Sen. D'Amato. Thank you so very much.

Thank you, Congressman.

Amb. Guldemann. Thank you.

Mr. Salmon. Ambassador, I know this might not be necessarily within the realm of your purview, but a lot of speculation about the state of affairs in Russia, and obviously the Western media has focused a lot on President Yeltsin's health, and who would be the next successor. I have a lot of interest, personally, in the direction that Russia goes from here.

Do you have any speculation at all when Yeltsin does finally step down any thoughts on who some of the people might be that would be next in succession?

Amb. Guldemann. Well, it's well-known that President Yeltsin was very sick for a long time. But, you might have seen him on TV a week ago in his State of the Nation Declaration.

Mr. Salmon. He looked very good.

Amb. Guldemann. He was very strong. There was a long time when one had not seen him in such good shape going to the rostrum and having a 30-minute speech, and even his voice was very strong. This was one important impression. A second was what he said, I mean, he was very clear and very open and very critical on the situation in the country. And, let's say, my impression is more that he would like to cope now with the structural problems in a way which might hurt because it's necessary to bring about the necessary reforms instead of being nice to everybody. This is, let's say, a hopeful approach, and this also indicates, if he announces such a policy, that he is determined to stay in power for the next time. So that the question of new elections, I do not see it. But that's just a personal interpretation.

Mr. Salmon. That's fine, and it was probably a bit of an unfair question. But in the future, do you suspect that President Yeltsin will maintain a high priority in the relationship with Chechnya, in a positive relationship with Chechnya, between Chechnya and Russia, or how do you envision that in the future?

Amb. Guldemann. Well, I don't know anything about President Yeltsin's personal attitude is on this issue for the next future or long-term, but what I see is very constructive, and also intensive approach by Ivan Petrovich Rybkin in these weeks that they really want to pursue this. Now, the next step will be, and this has been announced already, a meeting between President Maskhadov and President Yeltsin, and they might sign an agreement on, let's say, a peaceful

settlement in general terms between the two sides, and then maybe an economic agreement. Now, that is what they speak about. If this can be brought about, I think that this could even bring more stability in this relationship which has not been defined in the main issue. But it will be possible to tackle more immediate problems.

Mr. Salmon. Thank you very much. I don't have any further questions. I guess Representative Smith is coming to chair the meeting. We're not sure.

Well then, we'll go ahead and adjourn this meeting. Ambassador, we really appreciate your willingness to come and share your knowledge. Thank you very much.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:04 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]